UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/50/236
14 November 1995
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

Fiftieth session

REQUEST FOR THE INCLUSION OF AN ADDITIONAL ITEM IN THE AGENDA OF THE FIFTIETH SESSION

ADMISSION OF THE WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION TO MEMBERSHIP IN THE UNITED NATIONS JOINT STAFF PENSION FUND

Letter dated 13 November 1995 from the Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to request, in accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion in the agenda of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly of an additional item entitled "Admission of the World Tourism Organization to membership in the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund", an item which should be allocated to the Fifth Committee.

Pursuant to rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I am attaching an explanatory memorandum to this letter.

(Signed) Juan Antonio YÁÑEZ-BARNUEVO

95-35524 (E) 151195 151195 161195

/...

Annex

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

The World Trade Organization (WTO) is an intergovernmental organization of universal character established in 1975 with headquarters in Madrid.

Pursuant to resolution 2529 (XXIV) adopted by the General Assembly in 1969, the United Nations maintains close cooperation with WTO, as reflected in an agreement on cooperation and relations between the United Nations and the World Trade Organization which came into force on 22 November 1977. Subsequently, WTO has signed agreements with the main United Nations specialized agencies and, since 1976, has been an executing agency for the United Nations Development Programme.

WTO has a staff of some 90 international officials, the majority of whom are stationed in Madrid. In June 1995, WTO opened a regional support office in Osaka, Japan.

In December 1986 the WTO Executive Council, by decision 9 (XXIX), expressed its concern that the officials of WTO should be provided with a retirement scheme that would guarantee pension benefits generally recognized as standard for international civil servants. As a follow-up to that decision, the Secretary-General of WTO studied the possibility of membership for WTO in the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF), as that institution is open to international organizations whether or not they are United Nations specialized agencies, as long as they fulfil the criteria of article 3 of the Fund's regulations.

The principle of joining the Fund was approved by resolution 209 (VII) of the WTO General Assembly in 1987. In 1988 the Fifth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly considered the membership request favourably, although in the circumstances of that time it took no action on it. Consequently, the WTO Assembly at its eighth session (1989) decided to suspend the application of the resolution adopted at its previous session providing for membership in UNJSPF.

In 1993 renewed efforts were made to enhance the social protection of WTO officials when the tenth session of the WTO General Assembly adopted new staff regulations and rules which, inter alia, provided that "officials whose appointments are for six months or longer shall be entitled to participate in a retirement scheme providing, upon separation from service, benefits equivalent to those generally existing in international organizations". The same rule provided that the Secretary-General of WTO would adopt appropriate measures in this regard for approval by the WTO Executive Council.

To this end, the Secretary-General of WTO recruited experts in 1994 to undertake an exhaustive study on the selection of the most suitable pension scheme. At its fiftieth session, in May 1995, the WTO Executive Council, following consideration of a comprehensive report submitted by the Secretary-General, "recommended the General Assembly to select membership of the UNJSPF as

the best retirement option for the WTO staff; consequently invited the Secretary-General to resume negotiations with the Secretary of the UNJSPF ... for the organization's admission to the UNJSPF, effective 1 January 1996 or as soon as possible thereafter".

In the light of the Council's decision and an encouraging response from the Secretary of UNJSPF concerning the possible membership of WTO in the Pension Fund, Mr. Antonio Enríquez Savignac, the Secretary-General of WTO, on 16 June 1995 sent the Secretary of UNJSPF an official membership application for consideration by the Standing Committee of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board at a meeting in New York from 10 to 14 July 1995.

Following this official application and since the Board had recommended the approval of a membership application by WTO in 1988, the Standing Committee agreed in July 1995 that the Secretary would be justified in consulting the staff pension committees of member organizations in order to ascertain their readiness to approve by correspondence renewal of the previous application for Fund membership by WTO.

During July and August 1995 correspondence was exchanged between WTO and the Fund secretariat so as to ensure that the WTO staff regulations and staff rules were in accordance with United Nations common system. The Secretary-General of WTO undertook to submit to its Executive Council some minor changes to the staff rules that were considered necessary.

At its eleventh session, which was held in Cairo from 17 to 22 October 1995, the General Assembly of WTO endorsed the recommendation of its Executive Council concerning the application for membership in UNJSPF.

As is clear from the foregoing, WTO has expressed its desire to join UNJSPF as soon as possible, in order to remedy the problem of the lack of social protection of its staff, a matter which has been outstanding since the establishment of the organization.

Given that WTO fulfils all the requirements to become a member of UNJSPF, it is proposed that the General Assembly should give the necessary consent.

13 November 1995